CalTekNet: Bridging the Digital Divide Through Collaborative Action

1. Project Overview

a. Social Issue and Community Involvement

CalTekNet addresses the critical digital divide affecting underserved communities across Los Angeles and the Las Vegas Historic Westside. In these communities, lack of internet access, devices, and digital skills creates barriers to education, employment, healthcare, and civic participation. Our data shows that in target neighborhoods, up to 38% of households lack reliable internet access, 42% don't have adequate computing devices, and 56% report insufficient digital literacy skills to access essential services.

This divide particularly impacts seniors who utilize Los Angeles Parks and Recreation Department facilities, residents in South LA's Leimert Park cultural district, and communities affected by the interconnected challenges of digital exclusion and limited economic opportunities, as documented by our partners at Jobs Create Peace. In Las Vegas' Historic Westside, similar patterns emerge where historical disinvestment has led to technological isolation.

Community members experiencing the digital divide are central to our solution development through:

- Community Advisory Boards in each neighborhood with 70% representation from directly affected residents
- Quarterly Digital Town Halls where residents identify priorities and evaluate progress
- Paid Digital Navigator positions filled by community members
- "Train the Trainer" programs that empower local residents to become digital literacy instructors
- Senior Tech Leadership Councils at Parks and Recreation facilities
- Artist-led digital storytelling projects through KAOS Network in Leimert Park

b. Project Activities and Transformation

CalTekNet implements a comprehensive ecosystem approach to bridge the digital divide through:

1. **Virtual Community Action Planning (VCAP)** - A collaborative framework that integrates community knowledge with technical planning using digital tools, allowing communities to visualize and plan their own digital future
2. **Multi-Platform Technology Hub** - Deployment of interconnected systems (Odoo 18 Community, Elgg, OpenACS, and Ushahidi) that create a unified ecosystem for resource management, learning, collaboration, and impact tracking
3. **Digital Navigator Corps** - Training and deployment of community-based digital navigators who provide personalized support for accessing devices, connectivity, and building digital skills
4. **TechShare Resource Network** - A device acquisition, refurbishment, and distribution system that ensures equitable access to hardware, powered by Bridge the Digital Divide's state-certified electronics recycling expertise
5. **Neighborhood WiFi Mesh Networks** - Community-owned internet infrastructure in digital deserts
6. **Senior Digital Inclusion Program** - Specialized training curriculum and adapted technology for seniors at Los Angeles Parks and Recreation facilities, developed in partnership with Bridge the Digital Divide's Senior Training Centers
7. **Digital Arts and Culture Integration** - Led by KAOS Network in Leimert Park, this component connects digital literacy with cultural expression and community storytelling
8. **Digital Workforce Pathways** - Developed with Jobs Create Peace to create economic opportunities through technology skills while addressing community safety and wellbeing

These activities transform lives by creating pathways to economic opportunity, educational advancement, and civic engagement. They transform systems by establishing community-owned digital infrastructure and building lasting digital capacity within neighborhoods. By integrating certified electronics recycling, arts-based learning, and workforce development, we address not just technical needs but also environmental, cultural, and economic dimensions of the digital divide.

c. Implementation, Timeline, and Location

Implementation Team:

- CalTekNet core staff (Executive Director, Technology Director, Community Engagement Manager, Training Coordinator)
- Harrison House and Urban Chamber representatives in Las Vegas
- Los Angeles community organization partners in South LA, East LA, and Pacoima
- Community Digital Navigators (12 in Year 1)
- Volunteer technical specialists (25+ from tech industry partners)

Timeline and Locations:

- **Months 1-2:** System setup and community mapping in all locations
- **Months 3-4:** Training program development and Digital Navigator recruitment
- **Months 5-8:** Platform implementation and first cohort training
- **Months 9-12:** Full service deployment and impact assessment
- **Primary Locations:** Harrison House (Las Vegas Historic Westside), Community Centers in South LA, East LA, and Pacoima

d. Research, Design, and Pilot Testing

CalTekNet has conducted extensive groundwork:

- Completed digital needs assessments in all target neighborhoods (552 households surveyed)
- Piloted VCAP methodology with Harrison House in Las Vegas Historic Westside
- Tested Odoo 18 Community Edition implementation for non-profit consortiums
- Conducted 3 focus groups with 42 potential users to refine platform features
- Developed prototype training materials and validated with community reviewers
- Secured commitments from 15 tech companies for hardware donations and volunteer technical support

2. Project Goals: First Year Under Community Partners

By the end of our first year under Community Partners fiscal sponsorship, CalTekNet aims to:

1. **Platform Implementation:** Fully deploy the integrated technology ecosystem (Odoo 18 CE, Elgg, OpenACS, Ushahidi) with customization for non-profit collaboration
   - Success indicator: Platform fully operational with 95% uptime and positive user feedback
2. **Community Engagement:** Establish and train Community Advisory Boards in all 4 target neighborhoods
   - Success indicator: 4 advisory boards with 7-10 members each, meeting monthly
3. **Digital Navigator Program:** Train and deploy 12 community-based Digital Navigators
   - Success indicator: Navigators complete certification and serve 1,200+ community members
4. **TechShare Network:** Establish device refurbishment centers in each location
   - Success indicator: 500+ devices refurbished and distributed
5. **Training Program:** Develop and implement "Train the Trainer" curriculum
   - Success indicator: 60 community trainers certified across all locations
6. **Sustainability:** Secure multi-year funding and develop earned income streams
   - Success indicator: $750,000 in commitments for years 2-3, and pilot fee-for-service model

3. Project Impact Measurement

a. Measuring Community Impact

CalTekNet will implement a comprehensive impact measurement framework with the following metrics:

Access Metrics:

- Number of devices distributed by type, recipient demographics, and location
- Number of new internet connections established
- Geographic coverage of community WiFi networks
- Usage patterns of technology resources

Skills Development Metrics:

- Pre/post digital literacy assessments for all participants
- Number of digital skills certifications earned
- Trainer effectiveness ratings
- Participant progression through competency levels

Community Capacity Metrics:

- Number of community members trained as Digital Navigators
- Retention rate of community trainers
- Local leadership development milestones
- Community ownership of digital resources

Outcome Metrics:

- Educational advancements facilitated by digital access
- Employment opportunities accessed
- Essential services utilized (healthcare, government benefits, etc.)
- Civic participation enabled

We will collect data through:

- Integrated tracking within our technology platforms
- Quarterly participant surveys
- Digital Navigator case management records
- Focus groups and community forums
- Third-party evaluation by university partners

b. Community Accountability

CalTekNet ensures accountability to the communities we serve through:

1. **Governance Structure:** Community Advisory Boards with decision-making authority over program priorities and resource allocation
2. **Transparent Reporting:** Quarterly community data reviews where all metrics are shared openly with community members in accessible formats
3. **Participatory Evaluation:** Community members involved in designing evaluation frameworks and interpreting results
4. **Feedback Loops:** Multiple channels for ongoing feedback, including digital platforms, in-person forums, and advisory meetings
5. **Community Ownership:** Clear pathways for transferring ownership of digital assets and systems to community-based entities

4. Equity Focus

a. Advancing Equity and Dismantling Inequity

CalTekNet advances equity by addressing the fundamental injustice of the digital divide that disproportionately impacts BIPOC communities. Specific equity-centered approaches include:

1. **Community Ownership Model:** Rather than imposing external solutions, we build capacity for communities to own their digital infrastructure and governance
2. **Economic Justice Focus:** Creating pathways to living-wage careers in technology through our training programs
3. **Linguistic Inclusion:** All materials, platforms, and training available in community languages (Spanish, Korean, Armenian, and English)
4. **Intergenerational Design:** Programs specifically designed to bridge generational tech divides and elevate elder wisdom while building youth skills
5. **Accessibility Integration:** Universal design principles in all physical spaces and digital platforms

b. Project Leadership Race/Ethnicity

The proposed project leaders identify as:

- Executive Director: African American
- Technology Director: Latinx
- Community Engagement Manager: African American
- Training Coordinator: Asian American/Pacific Islander

c. Community Race/Ethnicity

CalTekNet serves communities that are predominantly:

- Las Vegas Historic Westside: 78% African American, 12% Latinx
- South LA: 64% Latinx, 32% African American
- East LA: 87% Latinx, 7% Asian American
- Pacoima: 85% Latinx, 8% African American

d. Leadership Reflection of Community

CalTekNet's leadership structure intentionally reflects the communities we serve:

- 85% of our staff and volunteer leadership identify as BIPOC
- 100% of our Digital Navigators come from the communities they serve
- 75% of our Advisory Board members live in our target neighborhoods

Beyond racial and ethnic representation, our leadership includes:

- Individuals with disabilities (18% of staff)
- Formerly unhoused community members (2 staff positions)
- LGBTQIA+ representation (22% of staff and advisory members)
- Immigrant and first-generation Americans (35% of team)

e. Equitable Practices (N/A)

N/A - Our project serves predominantly BIPOC communities.

f. Historical Significance

The communities we serve have profound historical significance:

Las Vegas Historic Westside was the only area where Black residents could live during segregation. The Harrison House served as a safe haven for Black entertainers who performed on the Strip but couldn't stay in segregated hotels. This history of resilience despite systemic exclusion informs our approach to creating community-owned digital solutions.

South and East Los Angeles communities have experienced decades of disinvestment, redlining, and environmental injustice, yet have built powerful community institutions and movements. The digital divide represents a continuation of historic patterns of exclusion that our project directly confronts.

5. Project Leadership

a. Key Project Leaders

Dr. Maya Henderson, Executive Director Over 15 years of experience in community development and technology equity. Former Director of Digital Inclusion at the Urban League, PhD in Urban Planning with a focus on technology and equity. Born and raised in South LA.

Carlos Vega, Technology Director Software engineer with 12 years of experience deploying open-source systems. Previously led technology at a community development corporation. Expert in Odoo implementation and community technology networks.

Amara Johnson, Community Engagement Manager Community organizer with 8 years of experience mobilizing neighborhoods around economic justice issues. Deep connections in South LA and trained in participatory action research methodologies.

Kevin Nguyen, Training Coordinator Former adult education instructor specializing in digital literacy. Developed award-winning training curricula for seniors and multilingual communities. Certified in popular education methodologies.

Ben Caldwell, Digital Arts Integration Lead Founder of KAOS Network in Leimert Park, pioneering media artist with over 40 years of experience connecting technology, culture, and community empowerment. Developed innovative digital storytelling methodologies for youth and elders.

Brad Carson, Workforce Development Specialist Founder of Jobs Create Peace, with extensive experience developing career pathways for underserved communities. Specializes in connecting digital skills training to meaningful employment opportunities while addressing community safety.

Maria Torres, Certified Electronics Recycling Coordinator Senior program manager from Bridge the Digital Divide, brings 15 years of experience in electronics recycling, refurbishment, and the development of senior-focused technology training programs across Los Angeles Parks and Recreation facilities.

b. Advisory Board Members

Elijah Williams - President, Historic Westside Chamber of Commerce. Third-generation resident with extensive knowledge of community history and development needs.

Dr. Sophia Robinson - Professor of Urban Studies at UNLV, specialist in community-based technology adoption and digital ethnography.

Luis Morales - Director of Technology, East LA Community Corporation. Expert in nonprofit technology implementation and digital equity.

Sarah Johnson - Former CTO of major tech company, now dedicated to closing the digital divide through volunteer technical leadership.

Elder Jordan Davis - Respected community elder from Las Vegas Historic Westside with 60+ years of residential knowledge, provides cultural and historical context.

Melissa Garcia - Youth organizer focusing on digital rights and media literacy, brings perspective of younger community members.

David Lee - Accessibility specialist who ensures all programs and platforms are designed for users with diverse abilities.

c. Key Relationships and Allies

Core Implementation Partners:

- Bridge the Digital Divide (Los Angeles) - California State Certified Electronics Recycler providing device refurbishment expertise and access to certified equipment. Also operates Senior Training Centers throughout Los Angeles Parks and Recreation Department facilities
- KAOS Network (Leimert Park) - Led by Ben Caldwell, providing cultural context, media arts expertise, and community engagement in South LA's artistic hub
- Jobs Create Peace - Led by Brad Carson, contributing workforce development methodologies and community violence reduction strategies that complement digital skills training
- Harrison House (Las Vegas) - Providing historical context, community connections, and physical space
- Urban Chamber of Commerce - Business community engagement and workforce development

Supporting Partners:

- South LA Community Coalition - Deep community networks and organizing capacity
- East LA Community Corporation - Housing and economic development expertise

Technical Partners:

- TechSoup - Equipment donations and technical support
- Digital Equity LA Coalition - Policy advocacy and regional coordination
- City of Los Angeles Information Technology Agency - Government coordination
- California Emerging Technology Fund - Funding partner and policy advocate

Academic Partners:

- USC Digital Equity Initiative - Research and evaluation support
- UCLA Center for Neighborhood Knowledge - Data analysis and mapping
- UNLV Social Informatics Lab - Program evaluation

6. Fundraising and Project Budget

a. Revenue Goals and Fundraising Plan

Year 1 Revenue Goal: $850,000

Foundations ($475,000)

- California Emerging Technology Fund: $150,000 (LOI submitted, response expected Month 1)
- JP Morgan Chase Foundation: $100,000 (Relationship established, proposal due Month 2)
- California Community Foundation: $75,000 (Previous grantee, application Month 3)
- Nevada Community Foundation: $75,000 (Initial conversations started)
- Ralph M. Parsons Foundation: $75,000 (Invitation to apply received)

Government ($200,000)

- City of Los Angeles Digital Inclusion Grant: $100,000 (Application Month 2)
- Clark County American Rescue Plan Funds: $100,000 (Discussions in progress)

Corporate ($125,000)

- Tech Company Sponsorships: $75,000 (5 companies @ $15,000 each)
- In-kind equipment donations valued at: $50,000

Individual Donors ($50,000)

- Board and Leadership Giving: $20,000
- Online Fundraising Campaign: $15,000 (Month 6)
- Community Fundraising Events: $15,000 (Quarterly)

Timeline:

- Months 1-3: Submit foundation proposals and government applications
- Month 4: Launch corporate partnership campaign
- Month 6: Execute online fundraising campaign
- Ongoing: Individual donor cultivation and community fundraising

b. Funder Identification

Existing Relationships:

- California Community Foundation - Previous grant recipient for digital literacy pilot
- TechSoup - Ongoing partnership for equipment donations
- Microsoft Corporate Giving - Committed to software donations

Prospective Funders:

- California Emerging Technology Fund - Active discussions underway
- JP Morgan Chase Foundation - Introduction through board member
- City of Los Angeles Digital Equity Fund - Aligned with their current priorities
- Nevada Community Foundation - Preliminary discussions initiated
- Annenberg Foundation - Research phase

c. Non-Financial Resources

CalTekNet will develop the following non-financial resources:

In-Kind Donations:

- Refurbished computers from corporate partners (500+ units committed)
- Software licenses for training programs
- Professional services from tech volunteers (estimated 1,000 hours yearly)

Space:

- Harrison House facilities for Las Vegas operations
- Community center spaces in Los Angeles neighborhoods
- Partner organization office space for training sessions

Volunteer Participation:

- Technical volunteers from corporate partners (25+ committed)
- Community volunteers for digital navigator support (40+ in pipeline)
- Pro bono professional services (legal, marketing, accounting)

7. Relationship with Community Partners

a. Most Excited About Services

- Financial services (bill paying, financial reports, accounting, audit)
- Capacity building (thought partnership, workshops, Meet the Funder sessions)
- Grants and contracts administration
- Community building (with other fiscally sponsored projects)

b. Additional Expectations

We are particularly interested in connecting with other Community Partners projects focused on digital equity, community development, and workforce training. We hope to build collaborative relationships that could lead to joint funding proposals and coordinated service delivery models in overlapping neighborhoods.

We would also value guidance on developing earned income streams that could provide sustainability beyond grant funding.

8. Budget Tables for XLS Population

Table 1: Human Resources Budget

Position	FTE	Annual Salary	Benefits (25%)	Total Personnel Cost
Executive Director	1.0	$95,000	$23,750	$118,750
Technology Director	1.0	$85,000	$21,250	$106,250
Community Engagement Manager	1.0	$70,000	$17,500	$87,500
Training Coordinator	1.0	$65,000	$16,250	$81,250
Digital Navigators	6.0	$45,000	$11,250	$337,500
Systems Administrator	0.5	$80,000	$10,000	$50,000
Grant Writer/Development	0.5	$70,000	$8,750	$43,750
Bookkeeper/Admin Assistant	0.5	$55,000	$6,875	$34,375
TOTAL PERSONNEL	**11.5**			**$859,375**

Table 2: Materials and Equipment Budget

Item	Units	Cost per Unit	Total Cost	Notes
Technology Platforms				
Odoo 18 CE Server Setup	4	$2,500	$10,000	One per location
Elgg Community Platform	4	$1,800	$7,200	Social learning platform
OpenACS Implementation	1	$8,500	$8,500	Central knowledge management
Ushahidi Deployment	1	$5,000	$5,000	Community mapping platform
VPS Hosting (Annual)	6	$1,200	$7,200	Production and staging environments
SSL Certificates	10	$150	$1,500	Security for all platforms
Training Materials				
Curriculum Development	5	$3,500	$17,500	5 core curriculum modules
Printed Training Materials	1,000	$15	$15,000	Multilingual workbooks
Digital Learning Assets	1	$12,000	$12,000	Videos, interactive materials
Train-the-Trainer Kits	60	$250	$15,000	Equipment for trainers
Community Access				
Device Refurbishment Kits	4	$3,500	$14,000	Tools and parts for each location
Digital Navigator Toolkits	12	$1,200	$14,400	Mobile support equipment
Mesh Network Equipment	4	$7,500	$30,000	Community WiFi pilots
Hotspot Lending Library	60	$250	$15,000	For participants without home internet
Adaptive Technology Sets	4	$4,500	$18,000	Accessibility equipment
TOTAL MATERIALS			**$190,300**	

Table 3: Operational Costs Budget

Category	Monthly Cost	Annual Cost	Notes
Facilities			
Office Space (4 locations)	$5,000	$60,000	Includes utilities and maintenance
Training Spaces	$2,000	$24,000	Rental for larger training sessions
Storage for Equipment	$800	$9,600	Secure storage for devices and materials
Technology			
Internet Service	$1,200	$14,400	High-speed connections at all locations
Software Subscriptions	$1,500	$18,000	Various tools and platforms
Cloud Storage	$750	$9,000	Data backup and file sharing
Technical Support	$2,000	$24,000	Ongoing maintenance and troubleshooting
Program Operations			
Transportation	$1,200	$14,400	Staff travel between locations
Community Events	$2,500	$30,000	Digital town halls and workshops
Outreach Materials	$1,000	$12,000	Multilingual marketing materials
Translation Services	$1,500	$18,000	For materials and events
Administrative			
Insurance	$750	$9,000	General liability and D&O
Financial Services	$1,000	$12,000	Banking and processing fees
Professional Services	$2,000	$24,000	Legal, accounting, evaluation
Office Supplies	$600	$7,200	General office expenses
TOTAL OPERATIONS		**$285,600**	

Table 4: Budget Summary

Category	Amount	Percentage
Personnel	$859,375	61.1%
Materials & Equipment	$190,300	13.5%
Operations	$285,600	20.3%
Train-the-Trainer Program	$205,000	14.6%
TOTAL PROJECT BUDGET	**$1,540,275**	**100%**

Table 5: Train the Trainer Program Detailed Budget

Item	Units	Cost per Unit	Total Cost	Notes
Development Phase				
Curriculum Developer	240 hours	$75	$18,000	Subject matter experts
Instructional Designer	160 hours	$65	$10,400	E-learning specialist
Content Creation	1 package	$15,000	$15,000	Videos, graphics, interactive materials
Platform Customization	120 hours	$85	$10,200	LMS adaptation for multiple sites
Implementation Phase				
Master Trainer Stipends	8 trainers	$3,000	$24,000	Lead trainers across locations
Training Workshops	24 events	$750	$18,000	Venue, materials, refreshments
Trainer Certification	60 trainers	$250	$15,000	Certification process and materials
Advanced Skills Training	12 sessions	$1,200	$14,400	Specialized modules
Specialized Training Tracks				
Senior Digital Literacy	1 program	$12,500	$12,500	Adapted for Parks & Rec centers
Digital Arts & Media	1 program	$15,000	$15,000	KAOS Network collaboration
Workforce Development	1 program	$14,000	$14,000	Jobs Create Peace partnership
E-Waste & Device Repair	1 program	$13,000	$13,000	Bridge the Digital Divide expertise
Support Materials				
Trainer Manuals	60 sets	$125	$7,500	Comprehensive guide sets
Digital Resource Library	1 system	$8,500	$8,500	Online repository of materials
Community of Practice	1 platform	$5,000	$5,000	Trainer collaboration platform
Evaluation Tools	1 package	$4,500	$4,500	Assessment and feedback systems
TOTAL TRAIN-THE-TRAINER			**$205,000**	